

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANAMA 01019 101631Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 EB-07 INR-07
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 OES-07 DODE-00 PA-01
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R 101238Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4610
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE
AMEMBASSY ATHENS GREECE
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN SAUDI ARABIA
AMEMBASSY DOHA QATAR
AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT OMAN
AMEMBASSY ROME ITALY
USLO RIYADH SAUDI ARABIA
AMEMBASSY SEOUL KOREA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN
USDOC WASH DC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS : ELAB, PFOR, EGEN, BGEN, BA
SUBJECT : KOREAN LABOR IN BAHRAIN

REFS : (A) 76 MANAMA 1174 (B) DHAHRAN 440 (C) SEOUL 3613
(D) KUWAIT 2345

1. SOME 2000 KOREANS ARE NOW WORKING IN BAHRAIN. 1400 ARE AT
WORK ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE OAPEC-OWNED ARAB SHIPBUILDING
AND REPAIR YARD (ASRY), THE CONTRACT FOR WHICH WAS WON BY
HYUNDAI CONSTRUCTION COMPANY IN NOVEMBER 1975 (SEE 75 MANAMA 1225).
THE ANTICIPATED COST OF THE PROJECT HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED FROM
THE ORIGINAL ESTIMATE OF \$138 MILLION. THE MANAGING DIRECTOR
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PAGE 02 MANAMA 01019 101631Z

OF ASRY TOLD US MAY 8 THAT THE COST WILL BE AT LEAST \$320
MILLION.

2. AS OF MAY 1, ANOTHER GROUP OF 500 KOREAN WORKERS HAVE TAKEN
OVER OPERATIONS AT THE MAIN COMMERCIAL PORT (MINA SULMAN),
SUPPLYING BOTH LABOR AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT TO THAT CHAOTIC AND
BURGEONING INSTITUTION. THEY ARE ON DIRECT CONTRACT, WITH

THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, FOR AN INITIAL TWO YEAR PERIOD. IN ADDITION ABOUT ONE HUNDRED HYUNDAI WORKERS ARE CONSTRUCTING MIDDLE-INCOME HOUSING FOR THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING. IN TOTAL, KOREANS COMPOSE ABOUT TWO PERCENT OF THE TOTAL WORKFORCE OF BAHRAIN.

3. THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF ASRY TELLS US THAT HE SENT A RECRUITING TEAM TO SEOUL LAST MONTH WITH AUTHORITY TO HIRE UP TO 600 WORKERS FOR THE SOON-TO-BE COMPLETED DRY DOCK. HE SAYS THEY WERE TURNED DOWN FLAT BY THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT ON THE GROUNDS THAT KOREAN WORKERS COULD NOW WORK ABROAD ONLY FOR KOREAN FIRMS (CONFIRMING CONTENTS OF REF C). BROWN AND ROOT, THE MAJOR AMERICAN CONSTRUCTION FIRM IN BAHRAIN, TELLS US THAT ITS TENTATIVE INQUIRIES REGARDING RECRUITMENT OF KOREAN LABOR HAVE BEEN SIMILARLY REBUFFED BY ROKG OFFICIALS.

4. LIFESTYLES AND WORKSTYLES OF THE KOREANS CONTINUE MUCH AS DESCRIBED IN REF A. WE NOTICE A FURTHER RELAXATION OF WHAT WE DESCRIBED AS KOREAN STANDOFFISHNESS, AS WORKERS INCREASINGLY MINGLE WITH THE LOCAL POPULATION. ON FRIDAYS (THE LOCAL HOLIDAY) THE SUQ OFTEN APPEARS TO BE 'LITTLE ASIA', SINCE BAHRAINI'S TRADITIONALLY STAY AT HOME OR HEAD FOR THE MOSQUE OR DESERT THAT DAY, THE MARKET IS TAKEN OVER BY KOREANS, THAIS, FILIPINOS, INDIANS AND PAKISTANIS. SOCIAL TENSIONS REMAIN MINIMAL. WE KNOW OF NO PROBLEMS SIMILAR TO THE 'REVOLT' WHICH TOOK PLACE IN SAUDI ARABIA. EVEN IN THE LOCAL BARS, WHICH KOREANS INCREASINGLY FREQUENT, THERE HAVE BEEN NO MAJOR PROBLEMS SO FAR, DESPITE HIGH LEVELS OF CONSUMPTION ON BOTH KOREAN AND BAHRAINI SIDES. WE CONTINUE TO SUSPECT THAT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MANAMA 01019 101631Z

LOCAL ASSUMPTION THAT UNDERNEATH EACH NEAT HYUNDAI UNIFORM LURKS A KUNG FU EXPERT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS.

5. ONE ASPECT OF KOREAN OFF-DUTY BEHAVIOR HAS DISTURBED THE RULER HERE. AMIR HAS COMPLAINED TO AMBASSADOR ON NUMBER OF RECENT OCCASIONS THAT KOREANS COME TO HIS BEACH IN TOO-LARGE GROUPS AND DO NOT MIX WITH OTHERS THERE OR SWIM AND SUN AS OTHERS DO. RATHER, KOREANS " WANDER ABOUT AND STARE" AT BIKINI-CLAD WESTERN WOMEN. WHETHER OR NOT KOREANS EVENTUALLY ARE BARRED FROM AMIR'S BEACH, THEIR RELATIONSHIPS HERE SEEM HEALTHY. THEY ARE WELL-ESTABLISHED NOW IN THE LOCAL EYE AS BEING HARD-WORKING, WELL-DISCIPLINED AND GENERALLY WELL-MANNERED. IT IS CERTAINLY UNUSUAL AND MAY BE UNIQUE, BUT THE ASRY PROJECT IS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE AND WILL BE COMPLETED IN OCTOBER 1977.

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